

God of the Impossible

Luke 8:22-56

We are in Luke chapter 8 this morning. Last week we looked at the first half of this chapter, which was basically a parable Jesus told to alert his disciples to the importance of not only hearing but obeying the Word of God in our lives – The Parable of the Sower. Simply nodding our heads in agreement with God’s Word isn’t enough, we need to obey and live it out. That’s what Jesus taught his disciples.

Soon after that, in the second half of chapter 8, Luke records that Jesus continued to do ministry in Galilee by performing some extraordinary miracles. He had already done many miracles, but these were taking it up a notch. As I studied this text, I noticed that in each scenario the people were facing impossible situations – terrible circumstances that no matter what they did, they couldn’t get out of.

Impossible situations are something we can relate to. I know that motivational speakers, graduation speakers, and popular media tell us that anything is possible if we simply put our mind to it, but that’s not actually true... at all. One of the sayings they repeat on WPCA is a quote from an author named Napoleon Hill: *“Whatever your mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”* And every time I hear it, I think, “That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard!” That’s not even close to being true. I’m not the guy you want to speak at graduation because I just can’t say things like that.

Life is full of impossible situations – I see them in my life, and I see them in others. Impossible means, *“not able to occur, exist, or be done.”* It’s something you can’t do. If you could, it wouldn’t be impossible. We aren’t superheroes or invincible movie characters. We’re real humans with many limitations and we all face impossible situations.

- They show up in our health.
- They show up in finances.
- They show up in marriages.
- They show up in relationships with family, neighbors, coworkers.
- They show up in our kid’s lives.
- They even show up inside us – deep rooted sin issues, addictions, temptations we can’t overcome.

We don't need to pretend like nothing is impossible. But we do need to know what to do when we face the impossible, because our natural responses usually make things worse – we might be in denial, we might panic and blow up, freak out, cower with fear, shut down and become crippled. That's what often happens in impossible situations.

But today we are going to consider a different approach. We are going to witness someone who is not hindered by impossibilities. We're going to see four stories where Jesus faced the impossible and we're going to see what he did and think about what that means for our lives today. The first takes place on the Sea of Galilee.

Read Luke 8:22-24a.

One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out,²³ and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.²⁴ And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

Leon Morris notes: *"The lake of Galilee is subject to sudden storms, situated as it is some 700 feet below sea level and adjacent to mountainous regions. Cold air from the heights is apt to sweep down through the precipitous gorges to the east and it can whip up the seas in a short time."* And that's what was happening to the disciples. This wasn't just a good soaker – this was a raging, ship-sinking, man-killing storm. They were going to die, and there was nothing they could do about it. It was impossible.

The second situation involves a man possessed by demons.

Read Luke 8:26-30

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.²⁷ When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs.²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me."²⁹ For he had commanded

*the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)*³⁰ Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him.

So here Jesus encountered a wild man possessed by a legion of demons. This wasn't just a man with a demon, like Jesus had healed before, this was a man with a legion of demons that broke chains and shackles and was unstoppable. To give you an idea what a legion is – a Roman legion had about 6,000 soldiers, so we're talking about hundreds if not thousands of demons. There was nothing he or anyone else could do to break out of his unending nightmare. Another impossible situation.

The third has to do with a very sick little girl.

Read Luke 8:40-42, 49.

*Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.*⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house,⁴² for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying...⁴⁹ While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more."

Another nightmare. This man's precious daughter just died. I can't even imagine how horrible that would be. No treatment or medicine was going to bring her back. It was an impossible situation.

The final one is about a woman with an incurable disease.

Read Luke 8:42b-43.

*As Jesus went, the people pressed around him.*⁴³ And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.

So she had some kind of long lasting disease, which in that culture meant that not only was she sick, but she was ceremonially unclean and avoided by people. She

spent all her money trying to find a cure, but no one could heal her. There was no way out – another impossible situation.

So we have four impossible situations: The disciples were going to die in the storm. The man possessed by demons couldn't escape his nightmare. The woman who was bleeding couldn't be cured. And the little girl was already dead. The disciples were panicking. The demoniac was off in the wild. The woman was desperate. And the parents of the girl were crushed. There was nothing any of them could do. Impossible...

But then Jesus came, and I want us to see what he did.

When the disciples woke Jesus in the boat and told him they were about to die, this is what he did...

Read Luke 8:24b-25.

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"

When Jesus approached the wild man possessed by Legion, we read this...

Read Luke 8:28-29a, 31-33

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." ²⁹ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man... ³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

When Jesus found out that the little girl was dead, this is what he did...

Read Luke 8:50-55.

But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." ⁵¹ And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. ⁵² And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." ⁵³ And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." ⁵⁵ And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat.

And with the woman who had the incurable disease, we read this...

Read Luke 8:44-48.

She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." ⁴⁷ And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Four impossible situations and Jesus overcame them all. It was impossible for the people involved, but not for him.

It reminds me of a time when Jesus was teaching his disciples about the difficulty of entering the kingdom of heaven and we read in Matthew 19:23-26: *And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. That's a truth that applies not only to people being saved, but to every impossible situation we

find ourselves in. When we face those situations in our lives, it may be impossible for us, but with God all things are possible.

What is the impossible situation you find yourself in? It's ok to admit that it's impossible and there's nothing you can do to fix it. You don't have to go into denial, you don't have to go into panic, you don't have to crawl under a rock and give up. Why? Because we are known and loved by the God of the impossible. He is with us wherever we go, and he knows exactly what we need.

In the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus perceived the fear and anxiety of the people due to hardship and desperate situations, he told them in Matthew 6:31-33: *"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"* ³² *For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.* ³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

Our God is the God of the Impossible. There's a song that I heard as a kid that kept coming to mind this week. Maybe some of you have heard it too...

Have you any rivers you think are uncrossable?

Have you any mountain you can't tunnel through?

God specializes in things thought impossible.

And He will do what no other can do.

So we've seen four miracles in the stories we looked at today, and God is able to do miracles in every situation we're in. But I also want to add that sometimes God knows of things that are even better for us than the miracles we're hoping for. Sometimes he doesn't bring about the miracle we seek because he wants to do something greater, something deeper. And he allows us to face the impossible to draw us deeper into him. To strengthen our faith. To uproot something that needs uprooting. To transform like in no other way.

And so, we need to learn to trust him, not just the miracles. Every time it's God's will to do a miracle in our lives, he will do that, and all of us have seen him do miracles – the fact that you're sitting here today with a relationship with him and not who you once were – that's a miracle. Some of you have seen miracles of healing, or financial rescue, or marriage or relational healing. God can do miracles. But sometimes it's his will to use the impossible situation for something

else, which is often portrayed in Scripture. God didn't always do the miracle that people wanted, but he did do something else that in that situation was even better according to his will.

So in learning to trust the God of the impossible we need to learn to trust him completely and his wisdom, his goodness and power toward those who believe. We can learn to truly cling to the promise that "for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."